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FIRST CITY HALL, 1696.

OLD NEW YORK.

BY JAMES GRANT WILSON.

ALTHOUGH the commercial metropolis of the western world had its origin in the pursuit of commerce, there is about the early history of New York a certain romantic and picturesque interest not perhaps found in that of any other American city. Boston was settled by the stern Puritan; Philadelphia by the broad-brimmed Quaker; Baltimore by the gay cavalier, but New York was cosmopolitan from the first. Stolid and deliberate Dutchmen, volatile French Huguenots, witless-bearing Quakers and Anabaptists, Swedes from the Delaware, Connecticut Yankees, Maryland cavaliers, Indians and African slaves formed the bulk of her population two centuries ago. Later

came the Irish, Germans, Jews, Italians — almost all the nations, so that in more or less heterogeneous mass may be found within her borders representatives of scores of principalities and powers—

“In one strong race all races here unite.”

Her government too often it must be admitted no government—has been equally varied and original in type. First, under that brief nondescript—Occidental in organization, Oriental in dreams—the Dutch West India company, her unhappy settlers lived under laws framed by a body of self-seeking merchants, administered by directors whose bigotry or ignorance or incapacity were so great as to lead us



James Grant Wilson, the son of the late poet-publisher William Wilson, of Poughkeepsie, New York, after completing his studies travelled in Europe and was for a time associated with his father in business. He was among the many young cavalry officers who distinguished themselves in the civil war, and was a favorite with General Grant, with whom he served at Vicksburg and elsewhere. General Wilson, who was promoted in March 1865, was for some time in command at Port Hudson, but during the same year resigned from the army, since which period he has resided in New York. He has written several books and contributed many articles to magazines, and edited the *Cyclopedia of American Biography*. He is at present engaged on a history of New York from its first settlement to the year 1712, and the illustrations that accompany the present article are taken from nearly 1,000 which have been collected for use in that work.

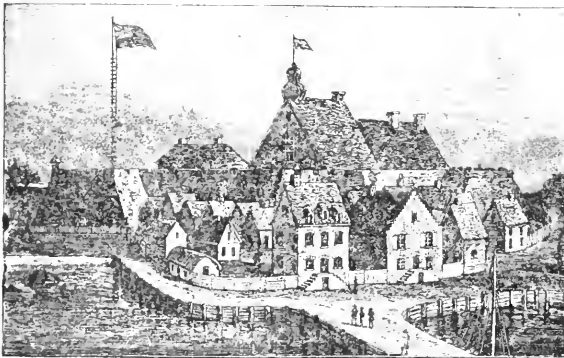
to infer that they were chosen for their unfitness rather than for their fitness. After England captured the city, in 1664, the quality of the laws was improved, but the navigation laws and port charges were intended to destroy, or at least restrict, her commerce, while most of the English governors were impoverished favorites whose exchequers must be improved at the expense of the people they governed, or soldiers of fortune whose services on the field entitled them to fill their purses from the revenues of a province. Under the republic for a time her government was pure and honest; to describe that of later years other adjectives must be used. Nevertheless her situation renders her peerless among American cities. On a long, low narrow island, washed on the west by the broad Hudson, on the east by the narrow estuary of the East river, with the unrivalled and beautiful bay before her, Providence seems to have intended



GOVERNOR STUYVESANT'S BOWERY.

quest when early in 1524 he discovered the bay and was probably the first European to enter and explore it. Nearly a century, however, elapsed before an attempt was made by any European nation to utilize its commercial advantages. This was at length done by Holland, then the foremost commercial power of Europe. Certain shrewd Amsterdam merchants in 1615 secured

from the states general a charter for a trading company and the exclusive privilege of trading to New Netherlands for the space of three years. Their object was trade, not settlement. They were succeeded a few years later—1621—by the "West India company"—a private corporation with sovereign powers, and a monopoly of trade for America, the Atlantic coasts of Africa and the isles between. It announced that it would attack Spain—then at war with Holland—in its American de-



THE "STRAND."

New York for the port of the nation. Already she is aspiring after statehood, and her population approaches that of several of the smaller states combined.

The discovery of her bay and site in 1524 was accidental.

The finding of a passage to India through or around newly discovered America was then as much the dream of bold navigators as is the discovery of the North pole to modern adventurers. The Florentine Jean Verrazano was on this

pendencies, but its real object was gain. A small trading post was established by this company on Manhattan island in 1624, and in 1625 a larger body of emigrants with cattle, seed and agricultural tools were sent out, and landing on Manhattan island in May 1626 founded the city of New York under the name of New Amsterdam. They were in command of the first governor, Peter Minuit of Wesel in Westphalia, who a few weeks later acquired an honest title by purchase from



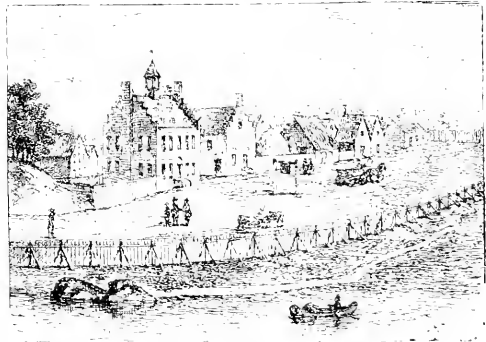
the tribe which then owned and occupied the island. When, in 1875, the writer asked the late Queen of the Netherlands if sixty guilders was not an exceedingly moderate consideration to give for Manhattan island, being about one-tenth of a penny per acre, her majesty, unaware that the trifling amount was not paid to the Indians in gold or silver coin, promptly replied, making the following clever defence of the thrifty Dutchmen, "Well, if the savages had received a larger sum for their land they would simply have drunk more firewater. With sixty florins they could not possibly purchase enough to intoxicate each member of the tribe!"

The Dutch dynasty thus founded lasted until 1664, when England seized the prize she had long secretly coveted. During this period it was governed by the West India company through its directors. These latter had supreme power, except that their subjects could appeal to the home company, and as a court of last resort to the states general. There was also a council of five appointed by the director, which had advisory powers only. The history of the city at this time is little more than a record of attempts of the people to gain power, of oppression of the Indians and retaliatory massacres on their part, of the gradual growth of a civilized community in the midst of the wilderness. The people gained a great victory when in April 1652

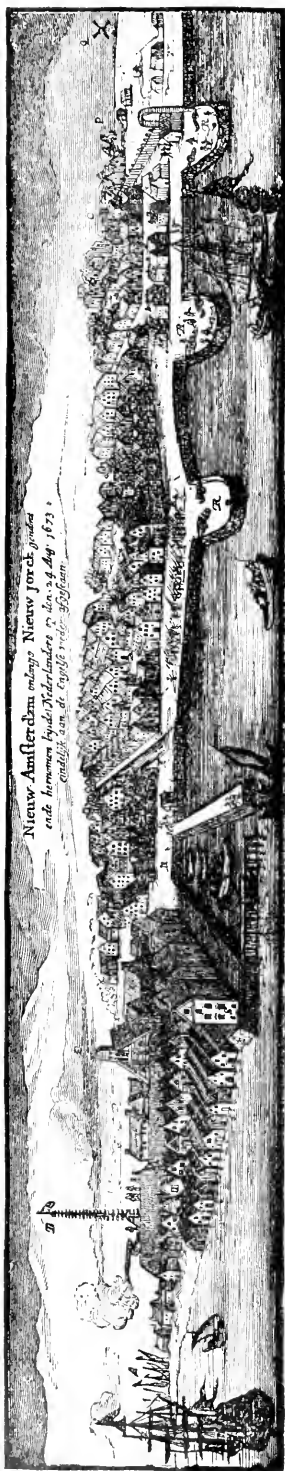
the first city charter was granted, which was modelled after that of ancient Amsterdam, and gave the people the right to elect two burgomasters and five schepens to assist the director in the government. The city then contained about 1500 inhabitants. Stuyvesant, the director, however, did not permit the people to elect, but appointed the new officials.

An English fleet, under command of Colonel Richard Nicolls, captured New Amsterdam in August 1664. Nicolls at once named the city New York, in honor of his master, James the Duke of York, to whom this same year the Dutch territories had been granted by his brother, Charles II.

Except for a brief period, from 1673 to 1674, when the Dutch recaptured and held the city, England governed New York



THE FIRST STREET ON EAST RIVER.



until the success of the revolution ended her power over the thirteen colonies. In many respects the city's condition was improved. Her growth was certainly much more rapid. She was ruled by governors as before, but the people were given a voice in the government. They could elect a legislature to look after their interests in the province and a mayor and common council to represent them in city affairs. A code of laws, much more liberal than Stuyvesant's, was framed, and trial by jury and a justice court for each town established. Instead of being the slave of a commercial monopoly, surrounded by provinces unfriendly to her, New York became one of several colonies, under the same general government, having the same language and common interests.

Her history during this period contains elements of the romantic and picturesque that an able historical novelist might turn to account. Voyages to the Red sea and East Indies were made and brought great wealth to the city; vessels of various kinds began to crowd her wharves. Snows, ketches, brigs and ships from Barbadoes and Curaçoa, colonial ports and the mother country, were there discharging cargoes of manufactured products, sugar, molasses and rum. The privateers too—swift, rakish craft called into being by the various wars—were numerous. Not a few of these, once on the high



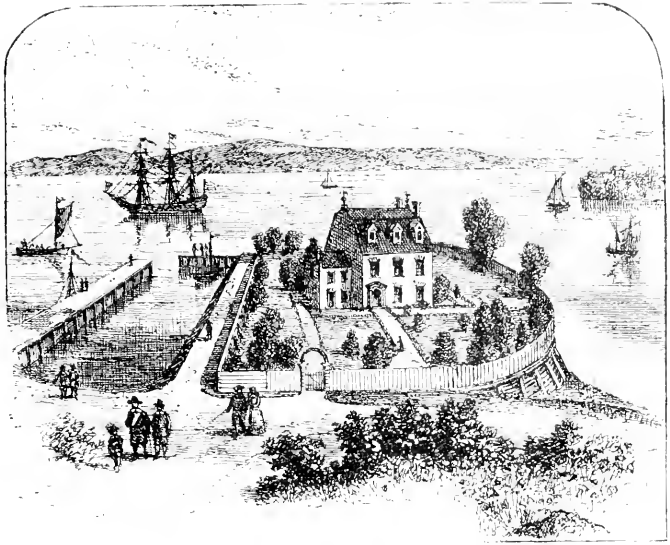
CORNELIUS STEENWYCK, THE FIRST DUTCH MAYOR OF NEW YORK OF WHOM A PORTRAIT IS EXTANT.

seas, turned their guns upon the craft of every nation and thus became pirates. Their favorite cruising ground was the Red sea and Indian ocean, where they captured and rifled the rich argosies from India and Arabia constantly traversing those waters, and either transferred their cargoes to their own holds or carried their prizes to a stronghold they had built in the island of Madagascar, where the cargoes were taken and brought home by vessels despatched from New York for that purpose. The pirates were most numerous in the reign of Governor Benjamin Fletcher (1692-1698), who, indeed, was accused of harboring and protecting them. While their day lasted they lent an oriental air to the city. They spent money freely, they were fond of appearing in public clad in rich stuffs of the East that formed a striking contrast to their bronzed and bearded faces. The city's warehouses too, in those days, were burdened with rich

treasures of the East—silks and shawls from Persian looms, rare perfumes and costly ointments, while gems and jewels of choicest workmanship in gold, silver, pearl and ivory were worn by the merchants' wives and daughters.

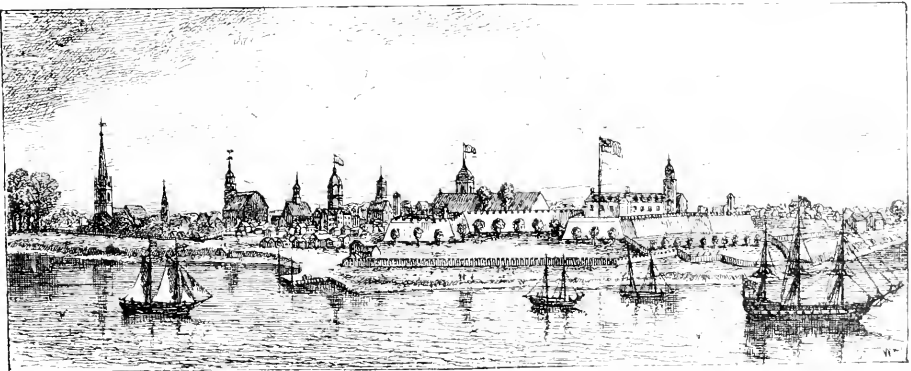
In the midst of this profusion and display there appeared in the harbor one day a vessel called the *Adventure Galley*, commanded by one Captain William Kidd, a shipmaster well known in the city, having been for many years in the London trade, who had been furnished by five English lords of high degree with a ship, and commissioned by the king to go in search of and take pirates wherever he could find them. Kidd beat the town for recruits, sailed away to the Indian ocean with a large crew, turned pirate himself, and became among the most notorious of the guild.

The English governors were fond of display and of all the trappings of royalty. Their entries were attended with great state and ceremony. The city militia, drawn up in arms, and the mayor and common council were at the landing place to receive them as they disembarked. The company saluted the governor "with

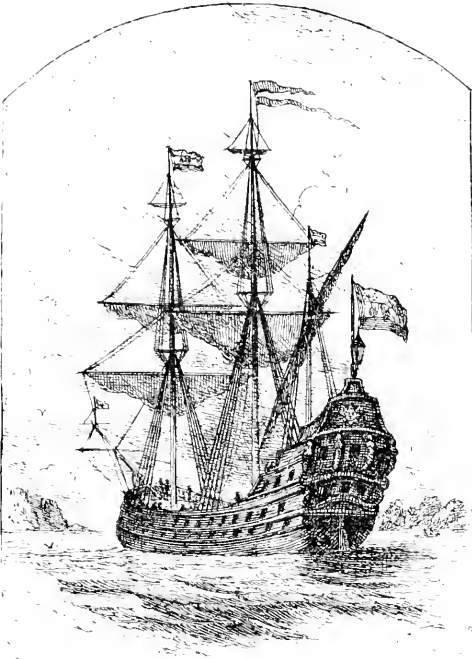


THE WHITE HALL, GOVERNOR STUYVESANT'S CITY HOUSE.

acclamation and firing," a procession was formed and marched to the fort, where the council chamber was thrown open and the governor's commission publicly read, after which the governor administered the oath to his council. After this the procession re-formed and marched to the City Hall, where the new governor was publicly proclaimed and his commission read to the people, which was received with "more firing and acclamation," and the ceremonies concluded with a grand banquet in the evening. The birthdays of the royal family and anniversaries of great events in English history were commemorated by banquets, speech making, parades, the firing of cannon and illuminations.



NEW YORK IN A.D. 1704.



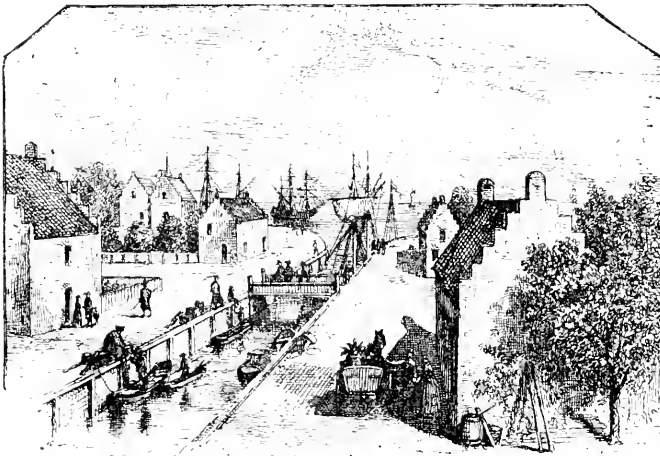
THE NEW NETHERLAND, THE FIRST SHIP BUILT IN NEW YORK.

During Governor Fletcher's administration Trinity church, the pride of all good citizens of New York, one of our few churches of historic fame, was founded. Fletcher contributed largely toward building the first church edifice, which was opened for worship in 1696, giving, among other things, the revenues of the King's

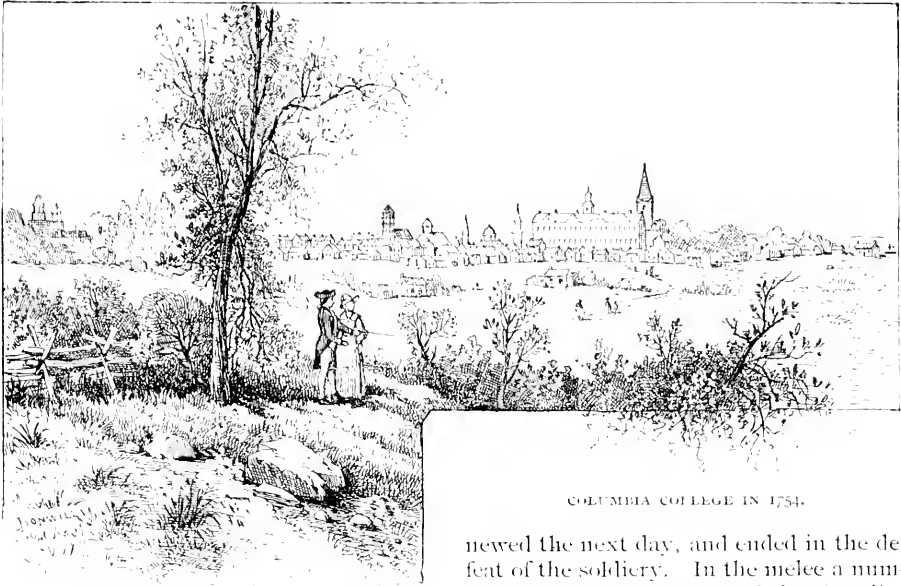
farm for a period of seven years. This first church was replaced by another in 1737. It was destroyed in the great fire of 1776, which followed the evacuation of the city by the Americans; was rebuilt in 1790 and this structure replaced in 1846 by the present beautiful edifice which stands like a sentinel at the head of Wall street.

By 1765 protests, fiery denunciations and threats of resistance heralded the approach of the revolution. In that great struggle New York was not behind her sister towns, although several of them fill larger space in the annals of the conflict. Nowhere did the Stamp Act of 1765 encounter greater opposition. The first Colonial congress at which resistance was hinted met in her City Hall in October of that year. On October 23, while the congress was still in session, the ship *Edwards* arrived with the stamped paper in her hold. She was received with hisses, deriding cheers, menacing looks and actions. The docks swarmed with people and the harbor shipping displayed flags at half mast, as if liberty were dead. That night men stole like shadows through the city streets, in spite of the rattle watch, and affixed to trees and house fronts billboards and placards which warned any person who distributed or used the stamped paper to take care of his house, person and effects. The Sons of Liberty organized. The people held open-air meetings in what is now the City Hall park, at which fiery speeches were made and defiant resolutions passed.

Sometimes, it is said, a pale young student from Columbia college named Alexander Hamilton climbed upon the rostrum, and electrified the audience by his eloquence; and again they listened to the persuasive oratory of John Jay, then a law student in the city. On the 31st of October the Stamp Act was to go into effect. "The last day of liberty," the patriots called it, and they



THE CANAL IN BROAD STREET.



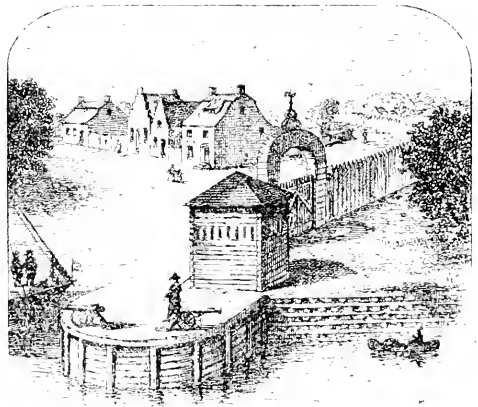
COLUMBIA COLLEGE IN 1754.

ushered it in with the tolling of bells and with muffled drums beating the funeral march. The country people appeared in large numbers; sailors came from their ships; the citizens joined them, and all marched through the streets, threatening vengeance against any who should dare use or vend the obnoxious paper, and singing patriotic songs in which the king, the governor, the troops and the Tories were mercilessly lampooned, and the future of America glowingly depicted. In the evening 200 merchants engaged in trade with England met, and after patriotic speeches passed spirited resolutions to import no goods from England while the Stamp Act remained unrepealed, to countermand all orders for spring goods already sent, to sell no English goods on commission and to buy none from strangers that might be sent out. This preceded similar action on the part of Philadelphia merchants by fourteen days, and of Boston merchants by thirty-eight days.

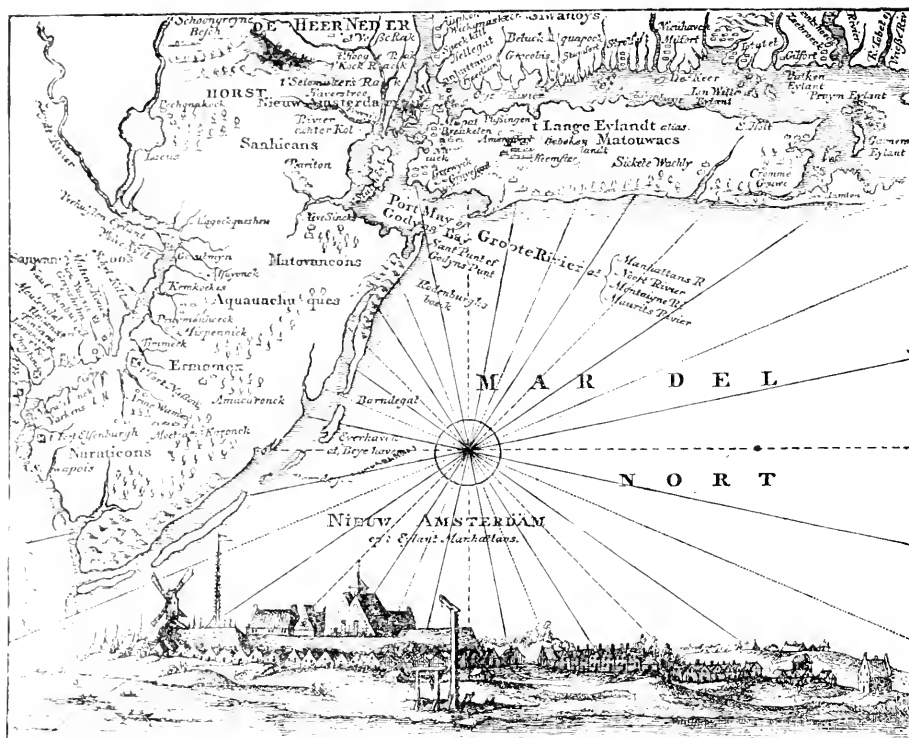
Boston has claimed the first blood shed in the revolution, yet it is in evidence that the distinction belongs to New York. On January 18, 1770, a collision between the troops and the citizens took place, following the tearing down by the former of a liberty pole which the Sons of Liberty had raised in the common breast of the soldiers' barracks. The quarrel was re-

newed the next day, and ended in the defeat of the soldiery. In the melee a number of citizens were wounded. A sailor was thrust through with a bayonet and fell. A Quaker named Field, while standing on his own doorstep, was cut on the cheek. Several others received bayonet thrusts. This antedated by nearly two months the famous Crispus Attucks affair in Boston.

The Boston Tea party is one of the notable events of history. New York held hers some three months later. News of the passage of the Tea Act was received by the patriots of New York with the declaration "that tea commissioners and stamp distributors were alike obnoxious,"



THE WATER GATE, WALL STREET.



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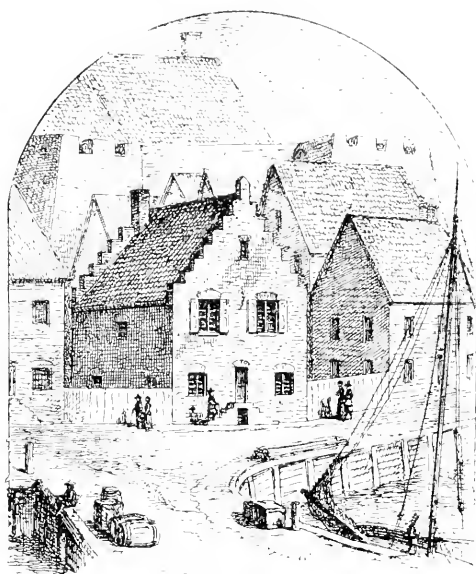
and they passed votes of thanks to masters of ships who had refused to charter their vessels to transport cargoes of tea. When the first tea ship arrived (the Nancy, Captain Lockyer, reported off Sandy Hook April 18, 1774) the pilots refused to bring her any further than Sandy Hook, and by agreement a deputation from the Sons of Liberty boarded her there and secured her boats that the crew might not escape, and thus afford her captain a pretext for not carrying her and her cargo back to England. Captain Lockyer was also guarded by this committee, and permitted to visit his consignee and procure stores, etc., for his return voyage, but was not allowed to visit the custom house to enter his vessel. In answer to the committee's demand Captain Lockyer agreed to sail on his return on Saturday, April 21. Placards were at once posted all over the city asking every friend of his country to attend a convention of citizens to be held on the wharves on Saturday morning at nine o'clock, that the captain might see with his own eyes

"their detestation of the measures pursued by the ministry and by the East India company to enslave this country." The bells were to give notice an hour before he embarked from Murray's wharf. At the hour of nine on the appointed morning a committee waited on the captain at his lodgings in Wall street to escort him to the wharf, where a sloop had been moored to convey him to the Nancy. The street was already crowded with citizens, called together by sound of bell an hour before. The ceremony began by the committee leading the captain to the balcony of the coffee house where he lodged, that he might look upon the people and they on him. His appearance was the signal for shouts from the multitude, and a band struck up "God Save the King." Then the committee and the captain took their places at the head, and the procession of citizens, to the sound of martial music, passed down Wall street to the dock. There captain and committee went on board the sloop, and were conveyed to the Nancy (which during this time had been

riding at anchor in the lower bay), every bell in the city save two—the official bell on the City Hall and that of Columbia college—ringing triumphant peals, the shipping showing their gayest hunting and the liberty pole on the common gay with flags, while artillery at its foot accentuated the victory of the people.

Before the *Nancy* could sail, however, another tea ship, the *London*, Captain Chambers, arrived. The latter positively denied that he had tea on board, and as his manifests revealed none he was permitted to come up to the city. The committee, however, had received word from the Philadelphia committee that tea was on board, and a delegation boarded the vessel at her dock, and told the captain they were prepared to open every package in his hold in order to satisfy themselves that his manifest was correct, whereupon the captain confessed that he had eighteen chests on board. The committee retired to deliberate. That night, about eight o'clock, a band of Mohawks visited the ship, hoisted up the cases of tea, broke them open, and after emptying their contents into the river dispersed without injuring the ship or interfering with the rest of the cargo.

New York's part in the revolution has been so fully detailed that it seems unnecessary to dwell upon it here. The city's great distinction and chief claim to the regard of patriotic Americans is that here the great instrument which made us a nation, the compact between the states, the Constitution of 1787, was conceived, discussed, formulated, and in spite of jealousies, individual, municipal, state and



THE FIRST BRICK HOUSE IN THE CITY.

sectional, and of the intrigues of land syndicates, speculators and dismissionists, adopted; that here the first president was inaugurated and the republican court instituted.

Since that day the growth of the city has been continuous and unchecked, despite the evil of occasional corrupt government administered for its own interests by a great political organization which derives its power from the dregs of the city's population. This remarkable growth has at times been greatly accelerated by opportunities which her merchants were quick to grasp, or by the accomplishment of the designs of sagacious and far-seeing statesmen and capitalists. Among the former were the opening of the China tea ports to trade and the discovery of gold in California. Among the latter the invention and development of the steamboat, the canal and the railroad as common carriers. Fulton's first successful steamboat, the little *Clermont*, pushed her way up the Hudson on her first voyage in 1807, pioneer of vast fleets of similar craft. The Erie canal, however, up to a comparatively recent date was the city's chief feeder and the principal factor in her remarkable growth. The success of steamboats on the Hudson probably first turned men's thoughts to the



THE FIRST CHURCH AND GOVERNOR'S HOUSE.

project of a waterway from Buffalo to Albany which should connect the great lakes with tidewater and give to New York the commerce of the West. On July 4, 1817, ground was first broken for the canal at Rome, midway between the two terminal cities. By 1825 the entire canal was completed and great preparations were made for appropriately celebrating its opening. This event was quite unique and poetic in character.

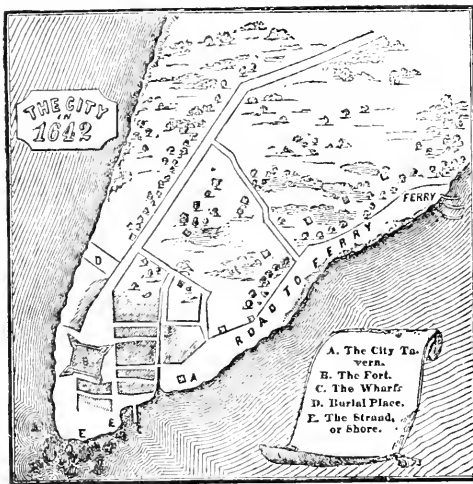
At intervals of eight or ten miles along its route cannon were placed, and also along the banks of the Hudson to New York. At ten o'clock on October 26, 1825, water was let into the canal at Buffalo and a pioneer fleet of canal boats started on their journey to the metropolis. Their departure was announced in New York by the relays of cannon at 11.21 A.M., one hour and twenty-one minutes from Buffalo. One minute later Fort Lafayette began the return fire, which reached Buffalo at 12.50 P.M., having made the circuit in less than three hours. The boats passed across the state, and were received at every important town with salvos of artillery and the acclamations of the people. They reached New York on the morning of November 4, where great preparations had been made to receive them. The corporation steamer Washington, with a committee of the common council on board, hailed them, and asked, "Where are you from, and whither bound?" "From Lake Erie, and bound to Sandy Hook,"



THE DAMEN FARMHOUSE, NOW THE SITE OF THE EQUITABLE BUILDING.

was the reply, whereupon the committee boarded the leading boat, and an alderman welcomed the visitors to the city. Some hours later a long procession of shipping was arranged and moved down the river and bay amid salutes of cannon to the Narrows, where Governor Clinton, standing on the bow of the foremost boat, held aloft a keg of lake water which had been brought from Buffalo, and poured its contents into the ocean, declaring that the act was intended to indicate and commemorate the wedding of the mediterranean seas with the Atlantic ocean.

The canal would have been a greater factor in the city's growth but for the development of the American railroad. For some years its chief office has been to keep freight tariffs low from fear of its competition. And yet the first railroad in New York was not opened for traffic until 1831. The Erie railroad, the first great trunk line, was opened in 1851 as a through line between the great lakes and New York. The city's maritime growth kept pace with and was in part the result of the development of the inland trade. It stirs one's pulses even now to hear veterans tell of the maritime victories of 1816-1850. The needs of transatlantic traffic in the absence of steam caused the establishment of lines of swift packets that very soon drove the clumsy old merchantmen out of the passenger carrying business.



THE FIRST MAP OF THE CITY.

The first of these was the Black Ball line, founded in 1816, with four, and later twelve packets, sailing regularly on the first of every month. This proved so successful that in 1821 the Red Star line was established, also sailing to Liverpool, which caused the Black Ball line to add four new ships to its fleet, and despatch a vessel twice a month—on the first and sixteenth. The graceful and swift-sailing clippers succeeded the packets, driving the latter from the ocean as passenger ships, as the packets had the merchantmen. The clipper ships originated in Baltimore, and were first built to meet the demands of the China trade, in which speed was preferred to capacity, the tea deteriorating greatly in quality by a long sea voyage.

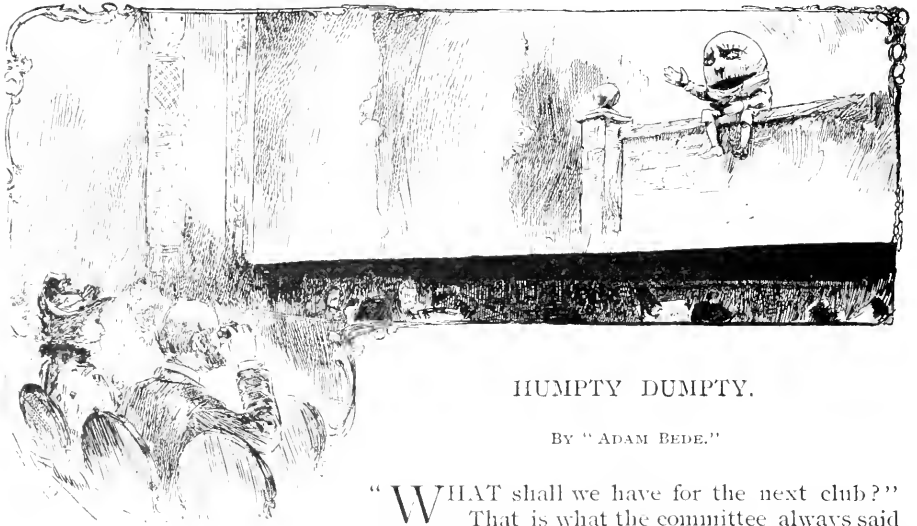
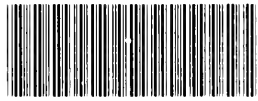
The discovery of gold in California in 1849 added greatly to the clipper service, since return freight as far as San Francisco, half the distance to China, could be secured. As California freight was bulky in character the capacity of the clippers constructed for this service was greatly enlarged, some of them, such as the *Challenge* and the *Invincible*, averaging 2000 tons. They made some remarkable voyages. For instance, the *Surprise*, belonging to A. A. Low & Brother of this city, made the voyage to San Francisco in ninety-six days, carrying 1800 tons of cargo and making on one day a run of 284 miles. The *Houqua*, another clipper, made the run from Shanghai to New York in 1851 in eighty-eight days, the shortest voyage that had ever been made,

and on a return trip sailed 328 miles in one day. But steam and the war together drove these beautiful sea couriers from the ocean.

New York is today completing her third century of existence. She is the centre of great and diverse interests, a republic in herself. The population massed within her narrow boundaries exceeds that of many a large state. Nearly all the trades and processes known to civilization are carried on within her limits. She is the financial centre of the Union. Her great publishing interests have made her the largest literary mart of the continent and among the largest in the world. Her wealth and population are increasing as never before. In 1626 the whole island, as already stated, was purchased for twenty-four dollars! In 1890 land for residence purposes on the Fifth Avenue was sold at the rate of twenty-seven dollars per square inch! and her real estate was assessed at \$1,398,290,007. In 1890 the duties collected on her imports amounted to \$153,900,052. During the same period more than 5000 vessels, with a gross tonnage of 6,258,222 tons, entered the port. Her foreign exports for the same period amounted to \$389,289,482 and her imports to \$562,735,987.

The metropolis has committed many mistakes, and is confronted by some problems. These her best citizens believe the future will solve, and in a manner conducive to her continued prosperity, usefulness and glory.





HUMPTY DUMPTY.

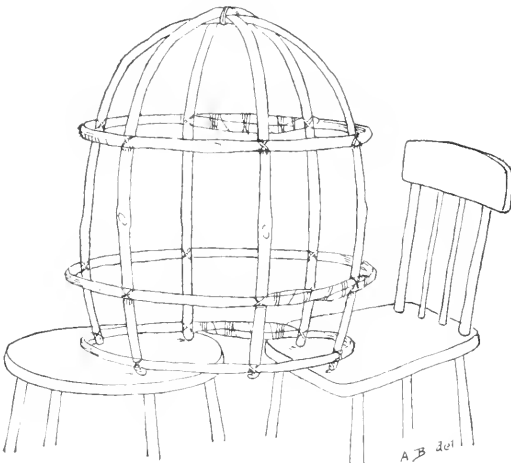
BY "ADAM BEDE."

"WHAT shall we have for the next club?" That is what the committee always said at its first meeting. You see, the club met every other Saturday evening through the winter, and some sort of entertainment, either of sense or nonsense, had to be provided by a committee in charge. These unfortunate persons paid a heavy penalty of work and worry for their two weeks' importance, and then, to reward them for their labor, they were allowed the privilege of naming their successors; and it was really a great satisfaction when the fun was over, and the supper was about ready, to clap hands, bring silence out of the lively talk that always springs up when nothing else is going on, and then by a few words consign four happy, careless members to the misery of inventing something new and getting it up for the next club in the short time of two busy weeks.

Some members are wicked enough to try to dodge their plain duty when their names are read out on the committee for the next meeting; they say they are going to Washington or something equally irrelevant. The thing to do with such perfidious ones is to talk to them beforehand, and invite them to a sleighing party or to a dinner for the Friday before the next Saturday evening meeting; and then if they

accept and say nothing about Washington, put them on the committee. Other members have the bad habit of allowing their names to be put on the committee, and at its first private meeting insisting that they are too busy to do anything but pull up the curtain when the entertainment is given, and the committee generally makes such backsliders do errands in town, go to the costumers and wig-makers and carry many bundles back and forth.

It was my unhappy fate to be named on a committee some time ago, along with Miss Wheigh, Miss Howman and Mr. Barker. None of us being imaginative in the way of excuses, we simply accepted the appointment, said we would do what we could, and lost our appetites for supper. Before going home that



MERELY BARKER HOOPS.

A B del